

Customer service extends to the web.(from the editor)

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<<http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=ucalgary>>.

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Microwave companies are part of a small, close-knit community. Relationships with customers are strong and many customers know about new products before they are formally announced. Many companies are so familiar with their customers' requirements that they can match new products to those needs. Such closeness lends much charm to this industry. But it also has led to some bad habits concerning customer service. Many companies fail to realize that their web sites are now the face that their customers see and know.

Many new customers come from all areas of the globe. As with many in this shrinking economy, RF/microwave engineers are overtasked and short on time. As a result, they rely on the web to specify parts and products. When looking for RF/microwave components, however, the results they find are often far from satisfactory.

As an editor, I spend a great deal of my time researching products, companies, and news on the web. My impression is that many microwave companies do not feel that they need more than their company name and address on the web. Or they have been sidetracked by the desire to have a flashy web site when in fact the audience just wants one that is functional. Either way, they are not providing the information needed by potential customers.

When someone visits a company web site, they want to quickly see what types of products the firm makes, what is new, and how to access technical information. Every site should have datasheets or at least a page showing the key performance specifications for each product. Think of a web site as a department store. Sometimes a customer is "just looking" and not interested in buying. Similarly, web visitors are often just looking. They are compiling data and comparing parts that may work for their design. They may not want to register and give up their firstborn just to get to a datasheet or application note.

I recently received a note from Richard Studarus, a loyal reader and potential customer of many companies, who felt that he needed to sound off about the lack of service he was getting from certain company web sites. In Richard's words, "All companies must be careful to view their web sites like their expected customers do. I've lost track of how many times I have tried to find a new component or product on a company's web site only to have to wait until the next business day to call them! Working engineers do a lot of this research after sales departments have left for the day. In today's environment, finding information on the web is an absolute necessity." Do not forget that your web site is providing customer service long after you and your staff have gone home.

Nancy K. Friedrich

Editor